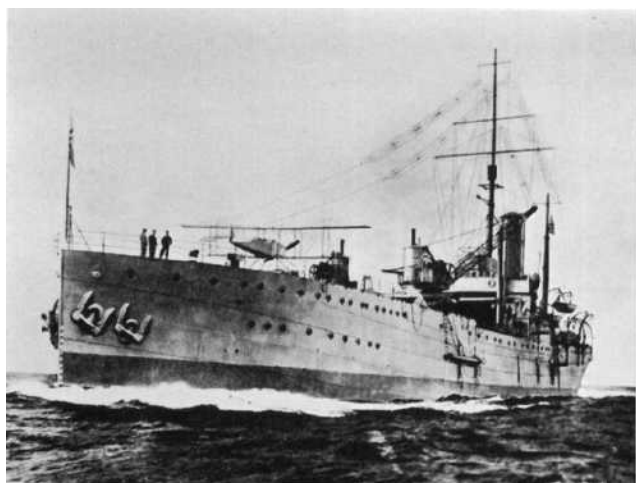


THE *ARK ROYAL* TRADITION

The name lay dormant for nearly three hundred years until revived for a new seaplane carrier, launched in 1914; this ship also had been commissioned as a merchant vessel and bought for the Royal Navy while under construction. Again, like her predecessor, she had her most historic engagement at the very outset of her career; her aircraft were present at Gallipoli, spotting for the ships covering the landings. Hence the second battle honour. Oddly enough she was not broken up until 1946, having served throughout the second world war under an assumed name, since she had been re-named when the third *Ark Royal* was laid down.



THE "SECOND"

The third *Ark Royal* was the first ship of the name to be laid down specifically for the Royal Navy and also the first aircraft carrier. Once more she was to see action almost as soon as she was commissioned, in 1938. She was involved in the second world war from its outset; eleven days after hostilities commenced, on 14th September 1939, she was attacked by U-boats. Then twelve days later the first enemy aircraft to be destroyed in the war was shot down by one of her Skuas. After this initial spell in Home Waters she went to the South Atlantic to take part in the hunt for the *Graf Spee*; however, her next battle honour was won early in 1940 off the coast of Norway, where she covered troop landings and evacuations and attacked the *Scharnhorst*; later in the same year she was operating off the North African coast, in

the attacks on the French fleet at Mers-el-Kebir; next she was to join the famous Force H under Admiral Somerville and took part in many famous operations during the next fifteen months, providing air cover for many of the Malta convoys and notably taking a leading part in the sinking of the *Bismarck*, the torpedo attacks of her aircraft crippling the battleship so that she was unable to escape. All the while she was wreaking this havoc among the enemy the German propaganda machine was busy sinking her daily so that *Lord Haw-Haw* and his repeated phrase, "Where is the *Ark Royal*?" became a standing national joke.

Nevertheless, she was not to escape indefinitely; on 13th November 1941, at 1541 she was hit by a torpedo, below the bridge. A very severe list developed almost immediately and despite all efforts to save her she eventually sank, fourteen and a half hours later, within sight of Gibraltar.



THE "THIRD"

There are two tales which illustrate the tremendous spirit which infused the third Ark. First, there was a little wooden board hanging on the compass platform, which normally appeared to be a complete blank. However, in moments of stress, when excitement was liable to cloud judgment, the Captain would turn the board around to show the inscription: "Pro Bono Publico No B---y Panico". Second, there is the tale of the Silver Bell.

THE *ARK ROYAL* TRADITION

At an impromptu meeting of survivors held in Gibraltar Dockyard soon after the sinking of the third *Ark Royal* it was decided to use the balance of the ship's fund to buy a silver bell for the next ship to bear the name. Two years later there was a casting ceremony at the works of Messrs. Gillet & Johnson, of Croydon, attended by survivors and the then First Lord, Mr. A. V. Alexander. When ready the bell was kept in the Wardroom of

R.N.B. Lee-on-Solent till the final stage in the story took place on 25th March 1955, when the bell was presented to the new ship in the presence of 250 members of the old ship's company. It was to be housed in a magnificent oak belfry, subscribed for by officers of the old ship and accompanying this splendid gift linking one ship's company and their successors in a continuous tradition was a framed vellum which says:

"This bell was cast at the behest of the company of the third Ark Royal in memory of a Great Commission.

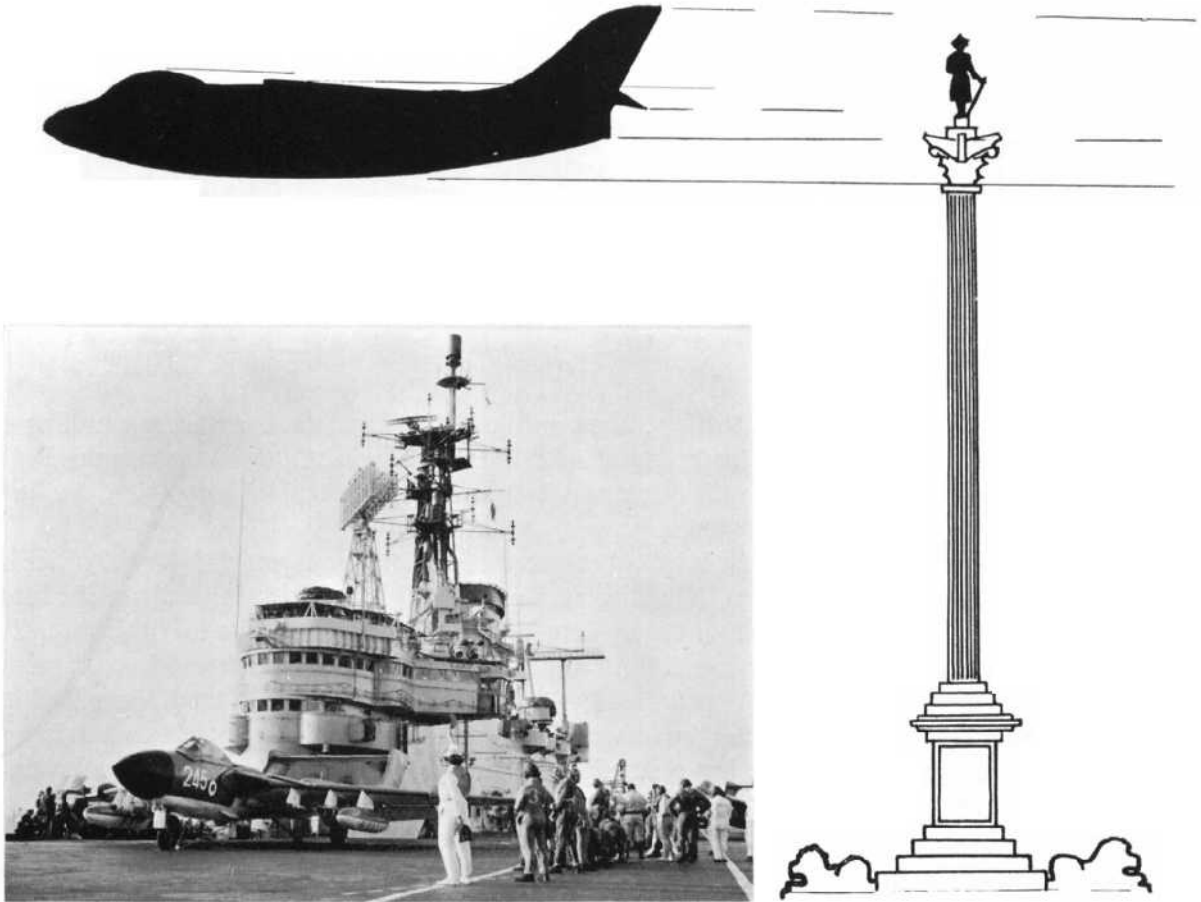
They bequeath the bell to all who sail in the ships that bear her name in the belief that the bond of fellowship and the spirit and enthusiasm which inspired them will live on in the Ark Royals that are to come.

May the sound of this bell remind us of the power of harmony in the lives of men."



THI: "SILVER BELL", ON THE QUARTERDECK

THE AIR DEPARTMENT



Admiral Lord Nelson would perhaps be amazed at the changes in the Royal Navy. He could not but admire the planning and team work necessary to operate the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, today's Capital Ship.

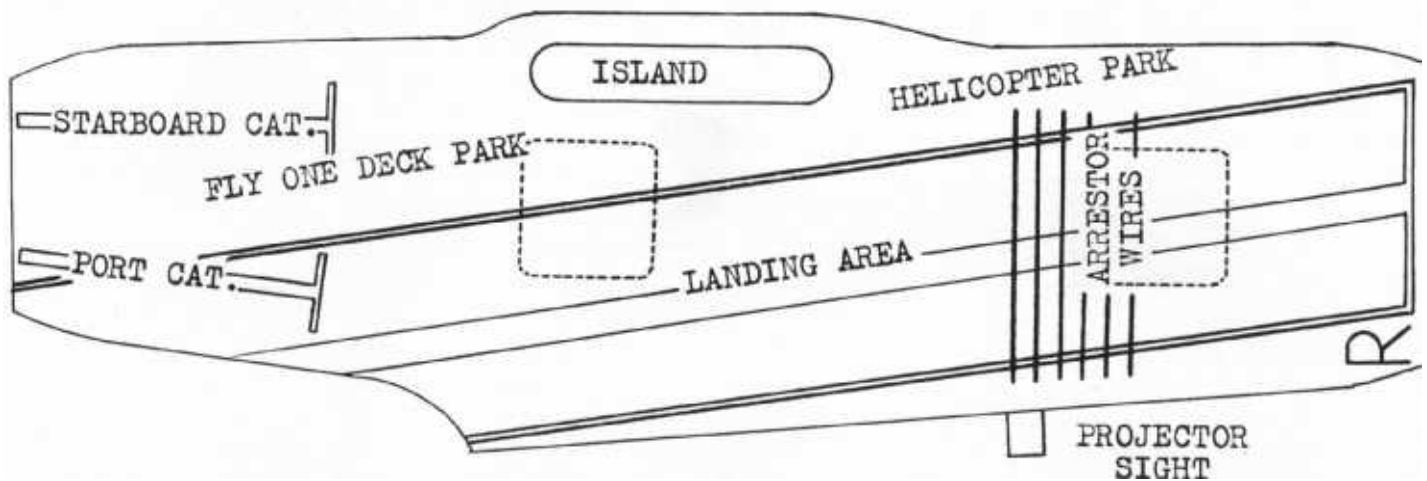
ARK'S Flight Deck

Before we launch an aircraft, a great deal of work is carried out to prepare it for flight. It is taken up to the flight deck on one of the lifts, and, as it appears above deck level, it comes into the tender care of the *Manglers* (Aircraft Handlers) of the Flight Deck Party, who look after it like a baby until it leaves the catapult.

The Flight Deck Party consists of four officers, one Chief Airman, four Petty Officer Airmen and ninety Leading and Naval Airmen. They are divided into two watches, one watch at a time being closed up during Flying Stations. Each watch is split up into handling teams, consisting of one Leading Airman, one tractor driver and two chockmen.

The movement of aircraft from the hangar to the flight deck and the allocation of parking spots on the deck is planned in advance in the Aircraft Control Room. This is manned by an officer and an aircraft Handler. They plan all the moves, using model aircraft on a miniature layout of the flight deck and hangars. The movement of aircraft continues throughout the day and night and represents problems that only a good draughts player would understand.

THE AIR DEPARTMENT



To go back to our aircraft which has just appeared on the lift at flight deck level, the handling team detailed to move the aircraft are waiting for it, they shackle their tractor on and move it along the deck. At the spot allocated to that aircraft it is handed over to the squadron personnel who complete the fuelling and arming necessary for the particular sortie.

Pilots man their aircraft, the flight deck is quickly cleared of vehicles and gear and on the order from Flyco all the engines are started together. The directors wave away the chocks and direct the aircraft out of their parking spots and into position for loading on to the catapults. The first two aircraft are positioned and launched in quick succession, a third and a fourth take their places and in a surprisingly short time all are airborne and the deck is clear, ready for the returning aircraft to land. They land on at about 45-second intervals, the hook catches the arrestor wire and the aircraft is brought to a halt in a very short distance. The directors are standing just clear of the landing area and as soon as the aircraft catches a wire they run out giving the pilot the signal to raise his hook and fold his wings. Once again he is in the hands of the Flight Deck Party who marshal him clear of the landing strip and park him in Fly One.

On completion of the land-on the sequence starts all over again. Serviceable aircraft for the next sortie are towed into position and prepared for the next launch. The unserviceable ones are taken down to the hangars and others brought up to replace them.

In between these fixed-wing launches the helicopters are flown on and off the deck and marshalled into their parking spaces. All this carries on from 0630 to 2300 on a typical flying day with the added difficulty of darkness for the night flying. A *Mangler's* work is never done.

ARK'S HANGARS

Is it night, or is it day? It doesn't really matter to the sailors of the Air Department, who form the hangar complement, for they live in a world of electric lighting and rarely see the blue sky and sunshine.

Since we have been in the Tropics it has been the practice of the Air Department to have the occasional Morning Divisions on the flight deck. Other than being a muster and having the padre conduct a short service the divisions are held for two further reasons, the first being to *air* what remains of the *men of the lost legion*, the second being to count their numbers, to make certain there are enough to move the aircraft. Those who have to be assisted to the ranks, with squinting eyes, with white, prickly-heat affected skins, are the men from the hangars.

There are two large hangars in the *Ark*, known as *garages*. In each *garage* we have a Hangar Control Officer in charge, who is assisted by a Petty Officer Airman.

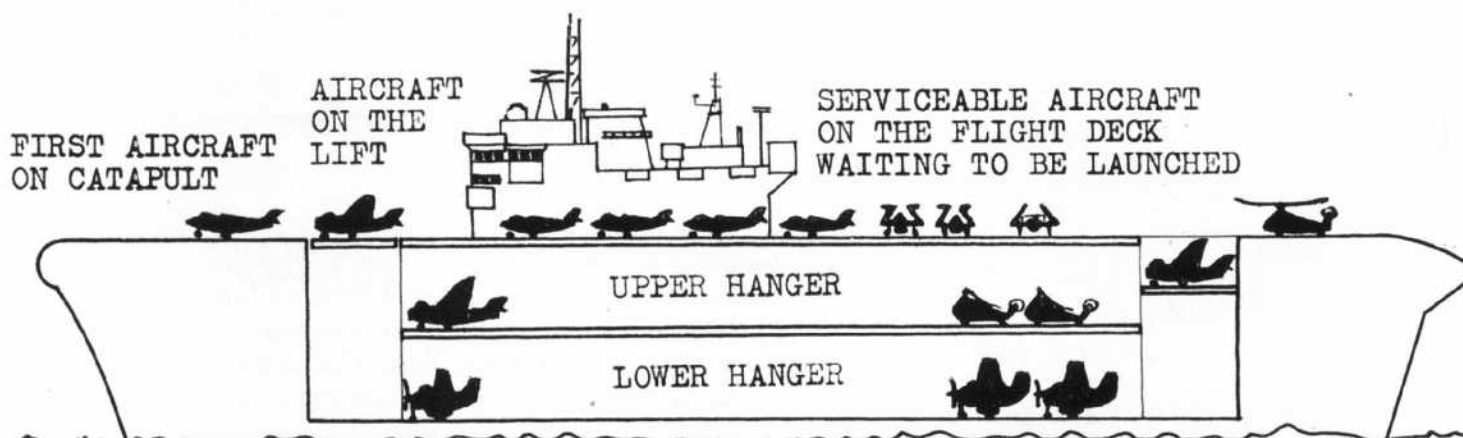
They are responsible for the Divisional organization of the hangar personnel, they also control almost everything else that takes place between the steel walls, except the aircraft maintenance.

THE AIR DEPARTMENT

A number of Aircraft Handlers are provided to the Hangars as sentries. Their duties include the patrolling of the deck areas, the security of the hangars during the silent hours, and the aircraft therein, and the manning of the Hangar Control Position Switchboard. They are normally on duty for a period of four hours, two hours on patrol and two hours on the switchboard.

The squadron aircraft handlers are controlled by the Hangar Officer during the normal working day. These ratings are complemented to the squadrons for the movement of aircraft and are divided into teams, two teams being on duty in the upper hangar at all times during Flying Stations and one team in the lower hangar.

The hangar teams are responsible for the safe and expeditious movement of all aircraft, either on to the lifts, which take them to the flight deck, or, from the lifts to the hangar, where they are positioned, then lashed down securely to the deck. They are reputed to be the only people in the world who can safely fit a twenty-foot aircraft into a nineteen-foot hole.



AIRCRAFT UNDER REPAIR OR NOT REQUIRED FOR THE NEXT LAUNCH ARE "STRUCK DOWN" IN THE HANGERS.

A team of aircraft handlers to move one aircraft consists of four men, all fully trained, and conversant with the types of aircraft on board. Their leader is known as a Director and is usually a Leading Airman. He is responsible for the movement and the safety of the aircraft under his control. The other members are naval airmen and carry out the duties of Mechanical Handler Driver (the Mechanical Handler is a diesel-powered unit which provides the moving power and locks on round one of the main wheels of the aircraft), second man is the Nose (or Tail) wheel steering number and finally there is the wheel-chock man, who is also the safety number.

These small teams work up together and become most efficient at their work, the final result being that they are capable of moving aircraft safely and with a high degree of skill, in very limited spaces.

Aircraft handlers also play a vital part in the ship's Damage Control Organization. In the lighter vein they help to change the role of the Garage overnight from a fully operational hangar to a Ballroom, a Cocktail Party Lounge, an Exhibition Space or a straightforward children's party and concert hall.

It is worthy of mention that the day hangar teams are known as the Rats. It is rumoured that they are only seen on the flight deck when there is a danger that the ship might sink. The night handling teams are known more appropriately as the Moles. They are rarely, if ever, seen at all, certainly not in the hours of daylight. They are reputed to hibernate somewhere down in the double bottoms.

THE AIR DEPARTMENT

A Buccaneer aircraft is marshalled on to the starboard catapult and the Flight Deck Party perform their various checks with swift efficiency; the thumbs-up signal to the Flight Deck Officer, to show all is well, is given; the roar of the jet engines increases, the green flag is dropped and the aircraft leaps away to become airborne.

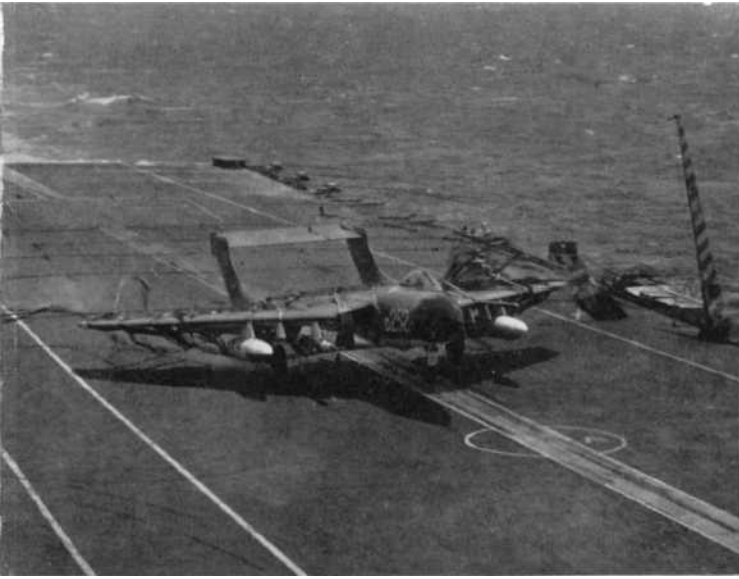


The Buccaneer returns with its hook lowered to engage the arrestor wire. Just beyond the nose wheel is the Search and Rescue helicopter, always airborne on the port side during take-off and landing.

Occasionally the hook does not disengage the arrestor wire and the Flight Deck Party have to manhandle the aircraft back a few feet. Just another of the numerous duties this trained team has to perform.



THE AIR DEPARTMENT



On the rare occasions when there is some un-serviceability in the aircraft hook or the arrestor gear the emergency barrier has to be used. This is a nylon net of immense strength designed to arrest aircraft safely from speeds in excess of 100 m.p.h. It is erected across the flight deck in three minutes by a team of aircraft handlers.

The hook of this Sea Vixen was damaged in a *touch-and-go* landing during a period of flying in the Indian Ocean. The flight deck fire-fighting team gathered round the aircraft as soon as it had stopped, though, fortunately, on this occasion their services were not required.



No problems with arrestor wires, catapults, or emergency barrier here - the Hawker P1127, Vertical Take-Off Aircraft, on the flight deck of Ark during trials in the English Channel.



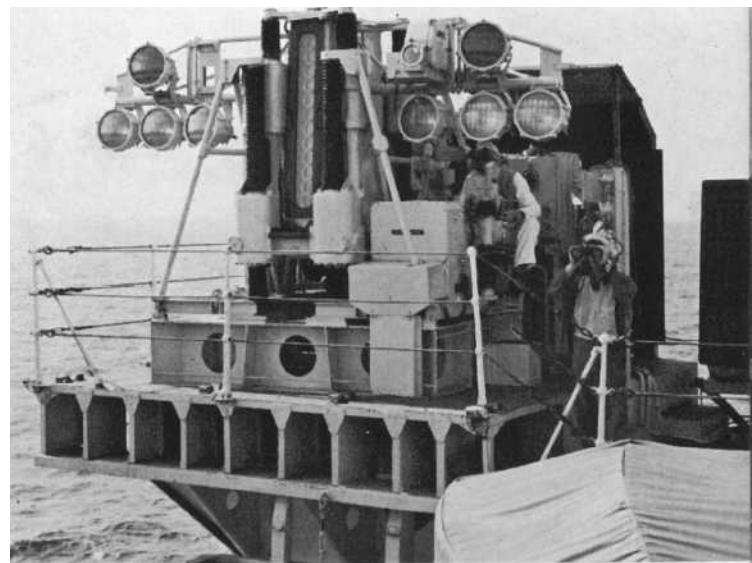
THE AIR DEPARTMENT

The Carrier Controlled Approach Team are closed up to *talk the aircraft down* by radar. This is necessary when the weather conditions are bad. The aircraft are guided along the approach path which will bring them down through the cloud to within sight of the ship.



The Captain and Cdr. (Air) watch the recovery of an aircraft, from Flyco. From this position in the ship's *island* all launches and recoveries of aircraft are controlled by Cdr. (Air) or Lieut.-Cdr. (Flying) who are in radio communication with the aircraft and the men on the flight deck.

The Projection Sight, a system of light beams which gives the pilot an indication of his correct angle of approach. It is manned by the Projection Sight Officer, who can give guidance on radio to the pilot if he has difficulty in picking up the correct beam.



SEAMEN



What is a seaman?" I asked my guide. "What is a seaman!" He echoed my question in horrified tones. "Don't you realize that the seamen do practically everything, except fly. You can always tell a seaman. Not much, but you can always tell him."

He continued scornfully: "The seamen are divided into parts of ship, such as Maintop, Quarterdeck, Tween-deck and so on." This was gibberish to me and it must have showed in my face, for he sighed heavily and explained: "The names are handed down from the days of sailing ships." I wasn't any the wiser but this had been said in such nostalgic tones that I thought I might cause him to cry if I pursued the matter. He started out of his reverie suddenly. "Let us tiptoe up to a seaman and listen to him as he reminisces on watch."

"Always in the public eye and always expected to be in bandbox condition, despite the ravages of general public usage. We have the satisfaction of knowing that the visitor to the Ark generally gains his first impressions as he steps on to the Quarterdeck."

"What a splendid orator," I said. "Is this the way seamen usually speak?"



AS HE STEPS ON TO THE QUARTERDECK?

"Sshh!"

"I concentrate on the after wooden acreage. This area must perform an *Identikit* of functions. From ceremonial receptions, through church, cinema, bar and dance floor; often within a matter of hours. One can conjure up hilarious permutations of these events which thankfully we have so far avoided, although such a prospect does nothing to restore the rapidly thinning hair of the Divisional Officer and the long-suffering Captain of Top."



QUARTERDECK PARTY?

SEAMEN

The voice rose to a scream. "Is he hysterical?" I wondered as I grabbed the arm of my guide. Then my attention was caught again as the voice fell to a whisper, it was soon apparent that he was far away with his sailing ships once more.

"We have ladders, we have booms and we have a boat. The former are intriguing, their rigging arrangements are believed to be one of the few surviving examples of an Admiralty design contract granted to Messrs. Heath, Robinson & Co. The after heavy jackstay is our replenishment responsibility and a good competitive spirit, with a liberal sprinkling of fruity prose, marks each R.A.S. The rigging arrangements present an attractive temptation to be cynical."



MAKING FULL USE OF MECHANICAL AIDS

I shuddered and drew my guide away from the sordid scene of cynicism which I felt was about to be enacted and asked him who kept the ship so beautifully clean; he smiled broadly and pointed to a little man labelled "Tween Decks" who had been plucking at my sleeve for some time.

"We clean the ship before hundreds of pairs of feet make the job impossible. At least that was the idea of the work-study officer, who had a head full of sadistic schemes. 'Just think,' he said, 'you'll have all these passages and flats to yourself at four in the morning.' We weren't enthusiastic but said we'd have a go. The carrot was that we had

our breakfast at 6.30 a.m. and stopped work at midday. It doesn't seem so bad in the afternoon but it's not so hot at 3.45 in the morning. To start with the Messdeck Storekeeper guards his brooms, brushes, dustpans and buckets like the Crown Jewels. He even makes a note of every single brush and bucket that leaves the store and as for the Teepol, Cleaning Paste, Wire Wool or Bluebell, you can't get it at any price. Makes you weep, you'd think it came out of his pay. Then, two hours later. Flying Stations! You've just succeeded in getting the corticine beautifully clean and you're about to finish off at the foot of a ladder and the stampede starts. One hundred, two hundred, a thousand fairies hotfoot for the flight deck, every single one clutching a cup of coffee, three-quarters full, leap over you. You look back at the corticine scarred with coffee stains, ground in with flight-deck boots, you look at the bulkheads, you wouldn't think they could walk there but they do, and you wonder why you ever bothered."



REDUCED ALLOWANCE OF CLEANING GEAR?

He wandered away down the passage singing his melancholy song.

"Picture if you can, a deckspace
With gleaming brass and snowy wood,
Picture if you can, a deckhead,
Gleaming white as deckheads should.
Glance along a shining passage,
Glowing like the morning sun,

SEAMEN

And gratify yourself by thinking
The war on grime is almost won.
See it now, five minutes later,
The brass is dull and gash abounds,
Regard it as you sadly ponder
Standing by for section rounds.
Think now of your brave decision
Not to let it get you down,
Wonder at your lack of vision,
Think of the Commander's frown.
Feel despair inside you rising,
Check insane desires to laugh,
Begin at once a restoration,
Lest it be your epitaph."

Just then we found our progress barred by a character carrying a canvas-covered frame, two pillows, a sheet, a copy of the latest James Bond, and a torch. The poor man looked dreadfully tired, he was introduced to me as Leading Seaman Braund. He told a pitiful tale.

"As the ship reached warmer climes, the camp beds started to appear on the weather decks. In order to secure a good billet, one had to be in the forefront of the nightly rush. I was one of the unfortunates who didn't get the idea of sleeping up Top until too late, and so the wandering started.

"I thought I had found a good one the other night. It was on the flat bit. I had just settled down to a good night's rest when a man in green overalls, looking very irate and foaming at the mouth, asked me in a most unusual way to move on. It appeared that I was holding up some mysterious ritual up there. So I moved down a couple of decks on the starboard side where I found a beautifully cool hole in the ship's side. Again I laid my weary head down to rest. Then I heard the sound of gunfire, the rush of many feet and loud shouts. On peering out from my pit, a large, black, dripping hose was dragged across my stomach. I deemed it necessary to move.

"With camp bed and sheet tucked under my arm I resumed my nomadic wanderings - I was very tired. I found a little passage with a stiff breeze blowing through it - at last a place to sleep. I carefully assembled my camp bed and laid out my sheet and pillows. I was just drifting off to sleep when there was a jerk, a crash and a curse and I

found a bearded stoker lying on top of me. At first, I thought it to be an abrupt attempt at seduction but this idea was soon dispelled - the language used by the gentleman by no means smacked of endearment. He suggested that I should move on and I replied that he should eat carrots and the interview closed. Five minutes later a naval airman gave me a close-up of his chukker boots and then the ship turned into wind, blowing me clear of my camp bed.

"I've tried everything to warn people of my presence and a few of them nearly worked. I painted the bottom of my feet with luminous paint but the doctor said this constituted a serious risk to my virility. I kept the light on but then found that I couldn't sleep, so I lie in terror waiting for the next person to tread on me.

"Chief, please put me on night work so I can sleep during the day."

His eyes glazed over and he pitched to the deck.



LOOKING FOR SOMEWHERE TO SLEEP".

My guide stepped over him carefully and while I was wondering whether I should follow, or attempt to render first aid, my attention was drawn to some papers blowing along the deck. As I am rather tidy minded I picked them up and was about to put them into an empty bin marked Litter when I noticed the curious heading, "Slurp".